

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

THE NEED FOR A BETTER HEALTH CARE ACCREDITATION SYSTEM

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 20, 1998

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, human rights violations are occurring every day in the United States—worse yet, the victims and the Federal Government are funding these atrocities. While many nursing homes do an excellent job, all too many nursing homes throughout the country are not providing adequate care for elderly patients. As the proportion of older Americans in the population continues to grow and the number of those requiring long term care also rises, we must find a better way to improve quality in nursing homes.

A Special Report on Nursing homes in the October 12, 1998 edition of USA Today profiles the devastating conditions in some Florida nursing homes. According to the article, the Brian Center in Tampa exemplifies the neglect which is all too frequent in the nursing home industry. More than a dozen "residents' rights" lawsuits, including a class-action claim, are pending against Brian Center of Tampa. These lawsuits accuse Brian Center and its succession of owners and management companies of systematic fraud, abuse and neglect orchestrated to inflate profits at the expense of vulnerable patients.

As the USA Today article describes, enforcement lawsuits against nursing home owners take up to four months to be heard in court, and an additional month to be decided. Fines are limited to \$5,000 per violation. Nursing homes only need to prove that they have improved the conditions of the home by the time of the hearing to defeat the enforcement lawsuit.

There is no substantial punishment for nursing homes which fail to adequately care for their patients. Further increasing the likelihood of poor care, government and private authorities like the Joint Commission on Accrediting Health Care Organizations do not effectively inspect facilities to identify existing problems. The date of annual inspections are rarely varied by more than a week, allowing nursing homes to present a positive example for the inspectors and then return to a poor standard once the inspection was finished.

The Brian Center and similar examples point out the problems with the Joint Commission on Accrediting Health Care Organizations, the national organization responsible for approving hospitals and nursing homes for Medicare coverage. The October 19, 1998 edition of The Wall Street Journal contains a succinct description of the problems with the current accreditation and ranking process for HMO's, "Who's on First?" by Nancy Ann Jeffery. Both JCAHO and National Committee for Quality Assurance accredit HMO's, but each uses a different standard. JCAHO itself provides multiple accreditation plans which allows each plan to measure their most positive indicators.

Using different standards for different accreditation renders the results of such accreditations useless. The rankings by JCAHO and NCQA are not standardized so comparing accreditation reports among provider groups is difficult and/or meaningless.

The Wall Street Journal article also identifies the key flaw in the JCAHO type of accreditation: conflict of interest.

When it comes to policing health-care quality, some groups are afraid to bite the hand that feeds them. In 1994 the Joint Commission rolled out a set of standardized performance measures off hospitals, at a cost of more than \$5 million, creating a much sought-after single yardstick for comparing one hospital with another.

There was just one problem: Some hospitals would look bad. The hospitals balked. So the Joint Commission, with a board dominated by the hospital industry and medical associations, backed off the plan.¹

The Federal Government needs to improve the oversight of accrediting organizations to ensure that they are protecting the consumer, and providing useful material.

A TRIBUTE TO ANGELA RAISH

HON. HEATHER WILSON

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 20, 1998

Mrs. WILSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Angela Raish and to let this Congress know about a loss that we as a Congress will soon suffer. Ms. Raish has been the personal secretary and scheduler to New Mexico Senator PETE DOMENICI. She has served for 21 years as the Senator's "vero braccio destro" or right hand.

Her pleasant manner and dedication to the Senator and to the people of New Mexico is unparalleled. She worked selflessly to ensure everyone in the office did the best work possible for the Senator and the people of New Mexico. To give you an idea of what an impact she made, her retirement celebration was hosted by the Senator and Nancy Domenici as well as former Senate Majority Leader Howard Baker, former Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole and former Senator Sam Nunn, a Georgia Democrat.

Raish who grew up in South Dakota, joined DOMENICI's staff in 1977. Truth is, she probably knows more New Mexicans than the Senator does. And all of them adore Angela. Along the way she helped hundreds of people with her warm, caring manner. Dedicated, loyal public servants make up the majority of people working on Capitol Hill. But, Angela Raish has set the bar at the highest level to which others should aspire.

¹ Jeffery Nancy Ann, The Ratings Game: Who's on First? The Wall Street Journal. October 19, 1998 pg. R16.

HONORING THREE OF LANSING'S UNSUNG HEROES—THE LANSING COMMUNITY ROLE MODEL CELEBRATION

HON. DEBBIE STABENOW

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 20, 1998

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. Speaker, on October 17, 1998, at our Lansing Community Role Model Celebration, I will be pleased to honor three of Lansing's unsung heroes. These women are true community volunteers, who, through their own dedication, commitment, and hard work have made our community a better place.

Mrs. Grace L. Demps, who has lived in Lansing since she was 6 years old, is a lifelong community volunteer. She has spent the last ten years making holidays dinners for hundreds of needy families. Mrs. Demps organizes and prepares these wonderful holiday feasts out of her own home. She solicits food donations and pays for the remainder of the supplies out of her own pocket.

Mrs. Demps has received the Sojourner Truth Award from the National Association of Negro & Professional Women's Club, and the Outstanding Community Service Award from the women of Union Baptist Church, Mother of the Year from her own Messiah Community Baptist Church, where her son, Rev. Lawrence Hinton presides. She is a member of the Greater Lansing Nurses Guild and the Lansing Association Women's Clubhouse.

Mrs. Demps recently retired as a 25-year employee from the City of Lansing Traffic Department. She is married to Willie Demps, and is the mother of 6 children, 35 grandchildren, 13 great-grandchildren, and 5 great-great-grandchildren.

Ms. Geri Roossien, who will be 66 on October 22nd, has used her own painful experiences with addiction to help many others through her job as a Substance Abuse Counselor at Cristo Rey Community Center, where she has been working since 1980. Although she retired on June 1st of this year, she is still involved in fundraisers and activities at the center.

Ms. Roossien is very close to her only daughter, Jannus, and her husband, Rob, and their two wonderful children.

Ms. Roossien served on the City of Lansing Human Resource Advisory Board from 1983 to 1996. She was also secretary for the Michigan Indian Benefit Association Board of Directors, a member of the Lansing Indian Center Youth Advisory Committee, the Native American Community Group, the Ingham County Women's Commission, the C.I.R.C.L.E. group, and the Indian Children's Christmas Party Committee. She is an integral part of many local political campaigns and activities in the Lansing community.

Mrs. Georgia Brown has been one of Lansing's most dedicated and committed community activists. She is an Honorary Life Member of the National PTA, a Life Member of the

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.